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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study of two kindergarten classes in a racially-mixed "magnet" school investigates three issues: (1) the extent to which teachers' definitions of appropriate behavior in an instructional context are shared by children in free play context, (2) whether or not classroom social structure differs when teachers have contrasting beliefs about their teaching role, and (3) how differences within and between classrooms are related to race. Over a period of 8 months, each classroom was visited weekly for 2 to 3 hours. Detailed notes and videotapes were made of classroom behaviors in instructional, cleanup and free play contexts, and videotapes were used in interviews with teachers and with two child informants from each class. It was found that the separation of children in Class A into two labeled instructional groups based on academic performance was reproduced in the structure of children's play activities. Children came to know one another as "smart" or "dumb" and became very competitive. Black children sank low in the class hierarchy. Instructional grouping in Class B was based on three unlabeled degrees of ability to work independently and two degrees of academic ability. Class B children did not classify classmates by ability. In Class B, cooperation in lessons carried over into interaction in play groups and black children enjoyed a high degree of prestige. In general, results indicate that teachers' organization of instruction affected children's peer interaction. (Author/RH)

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Shall We Cooperate or Compete?

Social Interaction in Two Integrated Kindergartens

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Paper presented at the 1981 Annual Meeting of the

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Research on teacher-student relationships can be characterized by three major approaches. The first one is the linear variable approach, where selected teaching behaviors are studied for their effect on student behavior, primarily achievement. These variables may be teacher attitudes and expectations, (Nash, 1976; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), teaching effectiveness (Brophy & Evertson, 1976), classroom management skills (Epstein, 1979; Kounin, 1970) teaching styles (Flanders, 1965, 1970; Silvernail, 1979), evaluation methods (St. John, 1971), personality (Walberg, 1968) or reward systems (Brophy & Good, 1974). A more comprehensive review of teaching behaviors can be found in Rosenshine (1976) and Dunkin & Biddle (1974).

A second approach is the study of classrooms as self contained social systems and the interpersonal relationships within them. Beginning with Waller's (1932) classic study, researchers have presented holistic descriptions of "classroom life" (Jackson, 1968) and have analyzed teacher-student interaction from a sociological/social-psychological persepctive (Getzels, 1969; Hargreaver, 1972; Martin, 1976; Withall & Lewis, 1963).

The third approach, and the one on which the research in this paper is based, is to study classrooms from an anthropological perspective, i.e., each classroom represents, in effect, a small cultural system, replicating patterns in the larger culture which subsumes it (Gearing, 1979, Leacock, 1971). In Gearing's model, all social events are jointly created and sustained through the participants' interactional behavior. The knowledge shared by participants as to the classes of persons and activities relevant to specific contexts is displayed through the patterns of behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, enacted between teacher and students, or between students alone. Unlike most social science researchers who assume the relevant classes are known in advance, (e.g., race, sex, SES, etc.), the ethnographic researcher seeks to discover and describe the patterns of a scene

in reference to how various elements are functionally related from the participants' point of view, an "emic" rather than "etic" perspective (Pike, 1955). Ethnographic studies of classrooms contain the most detailed accounts of teacher-student interaction (Smith & Geoffrey, 1968), and have been invaluable in illuminating the troubled relationship between middle class white teachers and disadvantaged minority children (Gouldner, 1978; Rist, 1970, 1978).

While participants may jointly create and sustain an event, it is clear that in classroom situations, particularly where young children are concerned, power to control events is not equally distributed. The teacher has much greater control over structural elements such as the daily schedule, the curriculum content, and the assignment of children to groups. This control is not absolute; all these issues can, and often are, renegotiated over the school year. However, the initial organization is the teacher's domain, and the choices made depend largely on the teacher's beliefs about the teaching role. Teachers who believe academic skills should be emphasized in a competitive atmosphere will organize classroom events very differently from teachers who place more emphasis on cooperation and other socialization skills. The context in which the teacher's greatest influence is exerted is in the instructional lesson, and the classes of persons and activities deemed appropriate here usually become the norm by which student behavior is evaluated.

The analysis of the instructional context is one common thread appearing in all three approaches. Although the analysis may be quantitiative or qualitative in form, the primary question always seems to be: What do teachers do that affects how students learn? This question reflects a cultural bias that schools are a place where children acquire cognitive skills and information only. Granted, these outcomes are important, but social outcomes are also critical, particularly in the primary grades where children are developing their first sustained peer relations, and may have little interest in academic outcomes. And in the case of

integrated or recently desegregated schools, social outcomes often supersede or even disrupt cognitive outcomes, until accommodations between different classes of students can be negotiated.

Research on social, or affective outcomes of teacher-student interaction have been infrequently undertaken, as noted by Dyer (1972). Ethnographic studies of children's peer groups are even more rare, although recent studies have appeared on children's organization of games and peer relations (Clement & Harding, 1978; Polgar, 1978). Yet, in any classroom, there are contexts where the teacher's influence is only peripheral, e.g., free play time, and an unanswered question is whether teachers can shape the social structure of children's events. More specifically, to what extent are the teacher's definitions of appropriate behavior in an instructional context shared by the children in free play context? A high degree of convergence would indicate: 1). The teacher's power to influence children's categorizations of each other; and, 2). whether consensus exists as to the 'shared reality' of the classroom social structure. Consensus produces a smooth, well functioning classroom, since there is agreement on the relevant classes of persons and activities which comprise the social structure. In contrast, considerable divergence would indicate not only that children develop perceptions independent of the teacher's judgement at an early age, but also the presence of high tensions, given two competing social structures. In this type of classroom, the battle for control may never be resolved even up to the last day of school.

In this paper, the following questions were addressed:

1). To what extent are the teacher's definitions of appropriate behavior, displayed through the labeling of persons and activities by contrasting categories in an instructional context, incorporated into childrens' peer interactions in a free play context?

2). Does the classroom social structure differ by teachers with contrasting beliefs about their teaching role?

3). How are racial differences manifested in either context within and between classrooms?

Methodology

School Environment

The school in which the research was undertaken served dual purposes. Its primary purpose was to serve as a research, development, and demonstration school for students and professors at a local college, and was situated on the college grounds. The school was also affiliated with the public school system of a mid-sized urban city, and its secondary purpose was to act as a "magnet" school to fulfill the requirements of a court ordered desegregation plan. Its "magnet" was that it operated under the "open classroom" philosophy, combined with an emphasis on individualized instruction. Admission to the school was by lottery, with two separate pools maintained. One was for City residents only, the other was for City and suburban residents. For desegregation purposes, the school was required to maintain a 50-50 racial balance, a requirement met in the early grades (K-3) but not in the upper grades, where the balance shifted to 65-35 (minority to white).

The grade levels ranged from prekindergarten to eighth grade. Instead of children being placed in individual classrooms, they were housed in multi-age, multi-grade learning environments called "clusters." Because the research focus was on young children, the Early Childhood Cluster was selected for an in-depth analysis. It consisted of two preschool classes for three and four year olds, taught by one teacher, and two kindergarten classes, both of which were all day sessions. The two kindergartens, the subjects of this paper, will hereafter be referred to as Class A and Class B.

Class A and B were located side by side, separated only by a small anteroom containing a desk and some supplies. The two classrooms were approximately equal in size, and contained equal facilities, including a stove and refrigerator, sink, and a children's bathroom. The two teachers utilized a team teaching approach: they followed the same daily schedule of events and coordinated lesson plans. In addition, for special events (field trips, auditorium shows) the two classes usually attended them together. Although children were based in either Class A or B, under the "open classroom" philosophy they were allowed to move freely between the two rooms. In reality, however, children rarely left their base classroom after the first few weeks, as they became aware that their teachers did not sanction each other's methods.

The teaching social structure of the Early Childhood Cluster was that one teacher was designated as team coordinator, and the other two worked under her direction. All three teachers were white females. Mrs. A had been at the school for three years, had a total of 13 years teaching experience and was a member of the City's teaching union. Mrs. B, who was on maternity leave for the first two months of the observations, had been with the school for eight years, but for the past three she had been on leave to work on a special college project. She was a member of the college faculty, and the team coordinator. During her absence, Mrs. A had been acting coordinator. When the observations began in September, each class contained 16 students. The race, sex, and social class distributions are given in Table I. A rough estimate of social class was made by using the number of punches on each student's identification badge. One punch meant the student was entitled to a free lunch; two punches, the student paid a reduced price; three punches, the student paid the full price. This caste system had not gone unnoticed; one teacher told me the school has been heavily criticized in the media the year before for using it. The school administrators, apparently, were undeterred by this criticism.

At the beginning of the second semester in January, eight new students were admitted to the kindergarten classes. Because Mrs. B felt her class was "too black" and had "too many boys", she exercised her perogative as team coordinator to select the children she wanted first. She chose three girls (two white, one Puerto Rican) and one white boy. Mrs. A then took the four remaining boys: two black, two white. The new distributions are given in Table II.

In private individual conversations with me, both Mrs. A and Mrs. B discussed their philosophy of teaching. Mrs. B's affective concerns were revealed in her comments that it was "more important for children to learn how to be proud of themselves" and that she didn't mind "backtalk". She also felt children of this age should be "learning how to work together" and "not worry so much about lessons." Her feeling was that Mrs. A imposed a structure too early and that "five year old behaviors show up in the first and second grades." When pressed, however, she admitted her children would encounter more difficulty in the later grades, since her philosophy varied quite strongly from other teachers, who expected more compliance with their demands.

In contrast, Mrs. A's philosophy was more cognitive oriented. She placed a greater emphasis on developing children's academic abilities" each to the best they are capable of doing." She felt Mrs. B placed too much emphasis on socialization skills, and felt her classroom was "too noisy - I don't see how they learn anything in there." However, she also admitted Mrs. B had more "difficult" (interpreted to mean more black) children to deal with than she had, and that Mrs. B had to assume control following a weak substitute two months later in the school schedule.

Procedure

The observations began the third week in September after school had started, and continued until the end of May, when school terminated. During this time, each classroom was visited once a week on the same day, for a period of two to

three hours time. From September until December the morning programs was observed, ending with naptime around 11:30. After Christmas, the observations were switched to the afternoon program, beginning at naptime and ending when the busses arrived at 1:45. This switch was made for two reasons. One, during the second semester, students from the college did their observations in the morning, which increased the number of adults in rooms and decreased opportunities for observations of child-child interactions. Two, the mornings were more often occupied by auditorium shows and field trips, whereas the afternoons rarely were.

During the afternoon program, two events were regularly enacted in each class between "storytime" and "cleanup", the teacher taught a math lesson, and the children played games of their own choosing. Detailed notes were made of the behaviors in each context, as well as a total of nine videotapes: four for Class A (one lesson, three free play), and five for Class B (two lessons, three free play). Two videotapes (one lesson, one free play) were selected and shown to the teachers and two child informants from each class. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed in conjunction with the tape transcripts and notes from the observations to identify the classes of persons and activities defining each context. The identified classes were comparatively contrasted between the two contexts within each classroom, and then again between the two classrooms. In addition to conducting interviews with the videotapes, the children were also asked to respond to six sociometric questions (e.g., Who do you like to play with the most?) about the peers. The teachers were asked to rank the children on three dimensions (academic performance, social dominance, and deportment) from high to low at two times: the end of December and the end of March. Responses to these measures were correlated with the names of children identified as members of a particular class of persons (e.g., "high independents"); the high correlations validated information about classes of persons obtained from the other sources.

Analysis

Instructional Context - Class A

In the early weeks of school, instruction was indivisible from "play." Either Mrs. A informally taught a lesson to the whole class, or she set up "activity centers" (science table, word puzzles table, etc.) and then moved from group to group making suggestions or comments about the children's activities. Her intent, as she told me later, was to become acquainted with the children's abilities in order to assign them to specific ability groups later in the semester.

Despite the lack of formal "work" groups, her classroom organization was formalized in other respects. Right from the beginning of school, the children were given daily room assignments (picking up toys, passing out papers, ringing the "cleanup" bell), the rules for play in specific areas (e.g., only three children in the "block corner"), general classroom behavior ("walking feet, not running feet") and rules for behavior outside the classroom (e.g., walking in the halls to the library). These rules established very clearly in the children's minds what behaviors were expected of them in concordance with Mrs. A's approval; transgressors were punished by having to sit in a "special chair" (next to the teacher's desk) or in severe cases, sent to the office.

Mrs. A also prepared the children for taking academic work seriously by her pattern of closely questioning children about activiites in or outside the classroom which she had directed. She would call upon children to describe an activity in detail, asking such questions as:

"Why did we go to _____?"

"What did we do there?"

"Can you tell me what this book is about?"

"Where can we find (names object)?"

What's the difference between this and this?"

Although her questioning made children more conscious of the processes of comparisons and classification, it had two unintended side effects. One, by constantly subjecting all activities to intense scrutiny, Mrs. A fostered the belief that all school activities were "work", that every experience had to be analyzed rather than just enjoyed for its own sake. Whenever some children attempted to deviate from the subject at hand by introducing stories of a personal nature (perhaps the activity reminded a child of another topic), Mrs. A either cut their talk short or ignored them during the discussions.

Two, Mrs. A's style made children aware that she preferred "good talkers", who were rewarded with increased attention and praise. In these question and answer sessions, highly verbal children who complied with Mrs. A's expectations had the advantage. Since most of these children were white, it also made children conscious of a racial difference, which produced in some white children a feeling of superiority. One of my child informants told me that "the black kids don't like to talk much in group, and that's why they're not good at work."

Approximately two months into the semester, Mrs. A began selecting children to work with her in a group apart, leaving some children "free to play" and assigning others to a project. The term "free play," was a misnomer; often Mrs. A would 'suggest' to children where they ought to play ("go play in the restaurant"), giving them, in effect, little real 'freedom'. The selection of children for the "work" group appeared whimisical ("all children wearing red today"), but in reality Mrs. A was disguising selection by ability. At this point, however, the groups were only weighted by "bright" or "slow" students, the group was still mixed by ability. My impression was that Mrs. A was experimenting with different combinations: a child of lesser ability who verbalized well might be selected with "brighter" children, whereas a high ability but taciturn child would be put with the "slower" students.

By now the activity structure had coalesced into a definite pattern, even to the extent of a transition marker between groups. When the first "work" group was finished, the children ran over to a "play" group and chanted, "next group, next group." This chant was the signal for the play group children to go "work" with the teacher, leaving the play area open.

Around the beginning of the second semester, Mrs. A divided the children into two "work" groups and labeled them the "tens" (the top ten academic performers) and "diez" (the bottom ten academic performers). In her private conversations, Mrs. A referred to them as the "brighter" and "slower" ones. These two groups remained constant until the end of school in May. The activity pattern remained constant; the only difference was that Mrs. A called children to "work" by asking the "tens" to sit in a circle, instead of selecting children by name or by random variables.

The children were very much aware of the 'hidden' meanings of the group labels, and among the "tens", open references were made to the lesser ability of the "diez" children. The "tens" were also intensely competitive in their sessions, vying for Mrs. A's attention, alone by themselves, very critical of each others work ("you're doing it all wrong, you know"). Competition was not so evident among the "diez" children, but it did exist, albeit to a lesser degree. They reorganized themselves to replicate the class pattern; the 'smartest' child interacted the most frequently with the teacher.

Instructional Context - Class B

The early history of this class was quite different from Class A, because for the first two months, the teacher was a permanent substitute who taught until the regular teacher, Mrs. B, returned from maternity leave. The substitute looked to Mrs. A for guidance, who felt the substitute "needed her help since she wasn't use to teaching in an urban school." The substitute attempted to emulate the

pattern set out by Mrs. A, but there any similarities between the two classes ended.

The substitute failed miserably at duplicating the same environment Mrs. A created. She was a gentle soul who by inclination was less interested in the children's academic performance and more in their feelings and emotional well being. She was also less task oriented, and if an assignment was not completed, the substitute was willing to "let it go until tomorrow." Very often children took advantage of her easygoing nature, and dawdled over completing "work", which meant that each day "work" groups were restructured, based on who had or had not "finished" the day before. The restructuring maximized children's exposure to one another, unlike Class A, where the same children tended to work together.

The substitute also had to cope with three very strong-willed boys (one white, two black) who required constant disciplining, and who quickly perceived the substitute's inability to control them. Their antics during "free play" forced her to leave a "work" group to discipline them, at which time those children promptly stopped "working" and began "fooling around." And as soon as she returned to the "work" group, another one of the boys would create an uproar, and so it went. Whether they were conscious of their actions or not, these boys applied very successfully a strategy of divide and conquer; never did all three misbehave at once. As a result, very little in the way of instruction was accomplished, while a great deal of socializing among the children occurred, both during "work" and "free play."

When Mrs. B returned, her first priority was to establish her authority. In effect, she began now what Mrs. A had accomplished two months earlier. However, Mrs. B had to compete with a social order already established by the children, an order based on the boys' dominance hierarchy. Naturally, taking control involved a battle, one which Mrs. B never felt she won completely. She told me

on the last day of school that "this was the worst class I ever had in eight years of teaching."

Although Mrs. B established the exact same set of rules for behvavior as did Mrs. A, it is important to remember that her concept of control was far less restrictive than Mrs. A's concept. Mrs. B limited her struggle for control to those areas over which she felt ought to dominate (most notably group lessons and class discussions), and granted responsibility for discipline (except for major infractions like fighting) to the children in their play groups. Unlike Mrs A, who was called upon to settle disputes, Mrs. B made it clear she did not like "tattletales," and when problems arose, she told the children "work it out among yourselves."

Like Mrs. A, Mrs. B first organized different kinds of activities and circulated from group to group. By January, she had formalized the classroom according to a specific pattern. She would select a group of children for work, assigning others to a project. Children not named were "free to play." At the end of the first group's lesson, Mrs. B would select another group, while the others did an assignment or played. At the end of the second group's lesson, Mrs. B would set up a special activity ("making bread"); children could either join her or continue peer play.

The most noticeable feature of her structure was the lack of formal labels for the first and second groups, even though they were comprised of specific classes of persons defined by the teacher. Those classes were "high independents," "less independent" (or "average kids"), and "low dependents." The levels referred to both deportment (ability to work without supervision) and academic ability ("high," "low").

Everyday Mrs. B formed the groups by employing a highly routinized move. After the story was read and discussed, she would stand up and announce, "I would

ike to see (names 7-8 children) over by the board." When she had finished a lesson with this group, she would call a second group, using the same move. In each group all three classes were represented, although the individual children varied from day to day. Over a month's time, every child worked with every other child at least once, in a work group, which meant they were exposed to different levels of ability and competence. Although a careful analysis of the groups' composition over the semester revealed that the first group (which received the most instruction time) was weighted more by "high independents" and the second by "low dependents," it was never the case that children worked exclusively with members of their own ability group during math lessons.[1]

The outcome was that children did not recognize ability or smart/dumb as relevant classes of persons. Not once did I elicit any reference to academic prowess. The closest I came to it was a class known as "good workers" but even then, it was apparent the behaviors they had in mind were "doing nice work," "not tearing up people's papers" and "listening to the teacher," all behaviors referring more to deportment than ability. In response to Mrs. B's question about choosing a partner for academic work, the two most popular choices, Shawn and Elaine, were members of the the "less independent" class, whereas, two of the "high independents," Richard and Nathalie, are only selected once or twice, both by friends and girlfriend. (Figure 1) Shawn and Elaine were also the most popular playmates. (Figure 2)

Mrs. B's mixing of groups produced another interesting outcome; instead of the children competing for her praise during lessons, they banded together and

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[1]For reading and language arts, children did work with their own ability group. However, Mrs. B had five levels, not two or three, which were racially mixed at the second, third, and fourth levels, and which again had no formal names (e.g., bluebirds, red team, etc.).

supported one another, particularly when one child was pressured by Mrs. B for a response. When a child answered a question incorrectly, other children either whispered (or shouted out) the correct answer, or tried to change the topic. This behavior frequently annoyed Mrs. B, and contributed to her feeling that instruction was often a case of "them against me."

Free Play Context - Class A

In the beginning, the children had considerable "free play" time, once they finished a task at an "activity center." However, after selecting children for "work" groups, Mrs. A reduced children's choices of play by telling them where to play, as well as their choice of companions for play. Not surprisingly, their classes of persons reflected the effects of ability grouping on peer relations.

In the early observations, the play groups tended to be segregated by sex, a not unusual finding for this age group. But by the second month, it was apparent that the children considered "good talkers" and "bright" by Mrs. A began to dominate the play groups. Two children in particular, Brian and Michelle (both white), copied Mrs. A's style of questioning in examining other children's work ("Why are you making that?") and giving praise ("That is excellent."), or condemnation ("You're not doing it right."). Their behavior was admired, not resented, by the other children; only a few described them as "too bossy" or "acting like the teacher."

Once the two main work groups were formed, it was not unusual to hear the "tens" children make references to the lesser ability of the "diez" children. While direct references like "dumb" or "stupid" were rarely heard (Mrs. A strongly prohibited these expressions), comparisons about work were made by such as expressions as "they don't work as hard as we do," "they use the baby books, and "they do the easy stuff." When a "diez" child tried to join a play group of "tens" children, he or she was told "get out - you're not a 'ten'." In "play," as well as "work," the "tens" were very competitive, frequently remarking, "mine's the best."

While the "diez" children were not as competitive, one child would assume a dominant role toward the others, telling them how to perform a task. In both the "tens" and "diez" play groups, a hierachial model of authority was followed, complete with a leader whose followers competed for their attention and favor.

Free Play Context - Class B

The spirit of cooperation exemplified during lessons carried over into the children's play groups. The children placed less emphasis on winning or loosing, and more on having "fun" while playing games. Even in groups where competitiveness surfaced in some children, other children would make a joke out of "winning," robbing the victor of any sense of real triumph. A good example occurred when a group of children were putting puzzles together. At first, two children, Nicky and Trena, pretended to race to see who finished first. Nicky did, and said he won. Later, Shawn and Elaine joined the group, and Shawn 'raced' against Nicky. Elaine declared that both Shawn and Nicky were "the champions," and held up their arms like prizefighters. When Nicky protested that he "won first," the other children laughed at him and continued playing, ignoring his protests and leaving him alone. This little episode demonstrated how a child who failed to understand the norms of the group regarding competition (Nicky) became ostracized from the group.

The classes of persons important to the children had to do with niceness and power, the latter especially important among the boys. One very popular boy, Shawn, was perceived as both "nice" and "the boss." In his case, his power derived from verbal, not physical ability, since he was a slightly built child who couldn't intimidate anyone. His ability to achieve a desired goal (e.g., getting a toy away from another child) without getting that child angry was astonishing for a five year old. I dubbed him the 'Haim Ginott' of the classroom, since his technique was very similar to the one espoused by Ginott. Shawn was also respected

by the black boys for being able to pass their tests of courage without acting afraid, even though he rarely joined in their games of power.

Physical power was important: being "tough" was critical to a boy's success in games. One black boy especially admired for his physical prowess, Tyree (he would take off his shirt during naptime and let the girls feel his muscle), became the class enforcer. Children would go to him to settle disputes, which he settled by clouting the 'guilty' party over the head. Mrs. B was furious when she learned her authority was being undercut by Tyree. Her idea of children handling disputes was through discussion of the problem - Tyree's undemocratic solution did not amuse her at all. While she tried to discourage the practice, the children continued to see Tyree as a main arbitrator of their arguments.

Effect of Race - Class A

It will not suprise the reader to learn that as the year progressed, black children sank lower and lower in the class hierarchy. For two black children, a boy and girl, the loss of prestige was especially bitter. In the early weeks of school, these two were very popular with all the children. However, once the work groups were formed, and they were assigned to the "diez" group, they discovered their "tens" friends were no longer so willing to play with them, or expected them to conform to the "tens" expectations as to the 'right' way to do activities. A particularly striking example occurred when Monique (the black girl) was completing her assignment at a table with three "tens" children (two white girls, one white boy). The task was to color a reindeer using colors coded by numbers; the nose was coded either red or black. When Monique attempted to use black, the other three began a concerted effort to maker her use red, telling her that "black's an ugly color" and "he has to have a red nose because it's Rudolph" (the reindeer had no name listed under it). Their verbal admonishments gave way finally to one of the white girls leaning over and recoloring the nose red; saying

with satisfaction, "there, now it looks right." At this point, Monique arose and put her paper away in her cubby, looking at me with such an expression of defeat and sadness in her eyes (she was close to tears throughout the entire episode) that I broke my rule of noninvolvement and told her "black is a nice color, too." She replied, "they didn't think so," and walked away. It was fascinating to later observe her behavior toward the two white children in the "diez" group, she bossed them around unmercifully (as did the other black children), treating them as she had been treated by the "tens" children.

The two boys who were the only black members of the "tens" were perceived very differently by the other children. One boy, Ray, was labeled a "trouble-maker" in the first week by the teacher; the white children avoided him because he was "bad" and "hurt people." He was defended by the other black children, with whom he played whenever he could. His very real academic ability could be discounted; he was not perceived as competition by the "tens" since he was always in trouble, he did not threaten a structure where power was achieved through displays of verbal ability, a power held by the white children.

The arrival of Sean, the second black boy, in January changed the equation. He too was extremely bright and verbally fluent, a charming boy who was anxious to do well in school, a sharp contrast to Ray, whose personal home problems (as revealed by the school psychologist) made it necessary for him to challenge any form of authority. While the usual finding is that white teachers fail to appreciate bright black children (Brophy & Good, 1974), it did not occur in this classroom. Mrs. A clearly doted on Sean and rewarded him frequently with praise and references to his ability during group lessons. His arrival, however, upset the social structure of the "tens" play group, placing him in direct competition with Brian, who until then had been regarded as the "smartest" boy. Sean's difficulties in peer relations are evident in Figures 3 and 4. While his academic ability is acknowledged by three "tens" children (Figure 3), two of them class

leaders (Brian and Michelle), he is not a favored choice as a play companion. (Figure 3) What is interesting about his selection by Nathan is that Brian considered Nathan his "best friend," who in turn thought Brian was too "bossy." In observations of the play groups, however, Nathan usually played with Brian, who controlled the male "tens" boys.

At the same time, because of his membership in the "tens," Sean was not fully accepted by the remaining "diez" boys, although he was not ostracized by them if he tried to join a play group. He usually wound up doing an activity alone, an outcome which puzzled Mrs A, who couldn't understand why he wasn't better liked by the children.

Effect of Race - Class B

Like their counterparts in Class A, most of the black children were in the fourth and fifth level reading groups, and the "low dependents" were exclusively black. None of the black children were members of the "high independents." However, because no special recognition was given to members of the "high independents" and also because children had opportunities to evaluate each other on dimensions other than academic ability, the black children enjoyed a high degree of prestige. Both the play and instructional groups were integrated, (although the play groups tended to be sexually segregated), and one unusual finding occurred: the white children emulated the language behavior of black children. The terms "boy" and "girl" replaced names as forms of address, and one white boy became quite skilled at playing the "dozens."

Although by the teacher's definition the "terrible discipline problems" were all minority children, the children did not associate "badness" with "blackness." One black boy, Marques, was disliked by the children for being a "sneak" - "he steals things" and "tells on you when you're bad." His low status was couterbalanced by Tyree, who as noted previously, was admired by the boys for his "toughness" and sexually attractive to the girls. He was considered the "boyfriend"

of the most popular white girl in the class, Elaine - the two often held hands or sat next to each other during "storytime" or rest time." In addition, one white boy, Richard, was also perceived as "bad" by the children, proving that "badness" was not the exclusive providence of black children.

Implications of Differences

Despite the use of a team teaching approach and the sharing of facilities (gym, music, art) and selected activites (field trips), two radically different social structures evolved in the classrooms over the year (Table 3). In Class A, Mrs. A developed a very tight structure complete with clearly stated norms of behavior, and created two specific instructional groups, labeled as "tens" and "diez", but interpreted by the children as 'smart/dumb'. Early in the school year, Mrs. A organized activities in such a way that the children had little time for "free play," and their play companions had to be selected from those Mrs. A did not take for group work. Because the children had little opportunity to create their own structure and define their own classes of persons, they adopted Mrs. A's definitions within peer interactions. As a result, black children were at a disadvantage since most of them were in the "diez" group; racial integration decreased over the year.

In contrast, children in Class B were able to develop their own peer social structure independent of the teacher, because the substitute teacher was unable to impose her own structure. The peer structure revolved around the dimension of physical power, with a dominance hierarchy created among the boys favoring the biggest and the strongest ones. Here, black boys enjoyed a special advantage. Two of them were admired for their "toughness" and street language use in the classroom. When Mrs. B returned, she imposed her own structure on those contexts (including the lesson) which she dominated but she did not interfere with the peer structure of "free play" activities. The lack of interference was in keeping

with Mrs. B's philosophy that "children ought to learn to settle disputes among themselves."

Interestingly enough, the children were as aware of the difference between the two kindergartens as were the teachers. At first, cross-class visiting was quite frequent, especially after children had finished their work. However, by December these visitations had almost disappeared, except for two boys in Class B (the two "toughest" ones) who felt free to go anywhere. When I raised this issue with my child informants, the two from Class A told me that Class B had too many "bad kids" in there, or, as one girl put it, "you can get hurt going in there." My informants in Class B disdainfully described children in Class A as "too good" and declared they had more "fun" in their classroom because "we bad."

It should not be interpreted from these observations that the contrast between the two kindergartens was as clear cut as saying Class A was well organized, orderly, and "good," while Class B was disorganized, chaotic and "bad." Mrs. B also had rules for children to follow, and her classes of person depended quite heavily upon deportment, i.e., the ability to work alone without supervision. The major difference between the two teachers lay in the degree of autonomy Mrs. B was willing to grant to the children during their own activities, an autonomy which necessitated the need for cooperation in order to make play possible. Mrs. B did control the behavior of the more aggressive boys so that other children were not tyrannized by their actions; her authority made democracy possible. Hannah Arendt noted quite rightly that the tyranny of one's peers in childhood far exceeds any authority imposed by adults. In Mrs. A's class, children competed for her approval since peer group status was based on it, and while children were never victimized by their peers (a not infrequent occurrence in Class B) they also had no need to learn how to work together. When disputes arose, they were settled by Mrs. A.

The teachers did share one similarity: in both classes the black children were in the bottom reading and math groups. However, in Class A their status was overtly recognized; as members of the "diez" group, all the children knew they were less competent academically. In Class B, their status was covertly disguised since they were always mixed with higher ability white children during math lessons. Even in cases when the "second group" consisted of all minority children, a group weighted by the "low dependents," they were not stigmatized because the group itself had no recognized name.

Since the results indicate that the teachers' organization of instruction affected children's peer interaction, careful consideration should be given to the social outcomes of the format of instruction. Teachers need to question whether it is really necessary in the early grades (K-2) to teach children to compete academically, without emphasizing cooperation and other socialization skills. Ability grouping is especially critical in a desegregated school where children are bussed in from different social worlds, and have no opportunity to socialize outside the school. If children from white-middle class neighborhoods consistently find themselves working with their own counterparts, racial integration will mean little more than just putting black and white bodies in the same school, without any true appreciation of each others differences and strengths.

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Table 1

Sex, Race, and Social Class Distribution of

Classes A and B - First Semester

Class A

	White		Minority		
	M	F	M	F	
1 punch	5	0	1	3	n=5
2 punch	2	2	0	0	n=4
3 punch	2	3	2	0	n=7
	n=5	n=5	n=3	n=3	
	n=10		n=6		

Class B

	White		Minority[a]		
	M	F	M	F	
1 punch	1	0	4	3	n=8
2 punch	0	0	1	1	n=2
3 punch	3	2	1	0	n=6
	n=4	n=2	n=6	n=4	
	n=6		n=10		

a Includes two Puerto Rican Children

Table 2

Sex, Race, and Class Distributions for

Classes A and B - Second Semester

Class A

	White		Minority		
	M	F	M	F	
1 Punch	2	0	1	3	n=6
2 punch	3	2	1	0	n=6
3 punch	2	3	3	0	n=8
	n=7	n=5	n=5	n=3	
	n=12		n=8		

Class B

	White		Minority[a]		
	M	F	M	F	
1 punch	1	o	4	4	n=9
2 punch	0	0	1	1	n=2
3 punch	4	3	1	1	n=9
	n=5	n=3	n=6	n=6	
	n=8		n=12		

a Includes three Puerto Rican Children

Table 3

Two Kindergartens

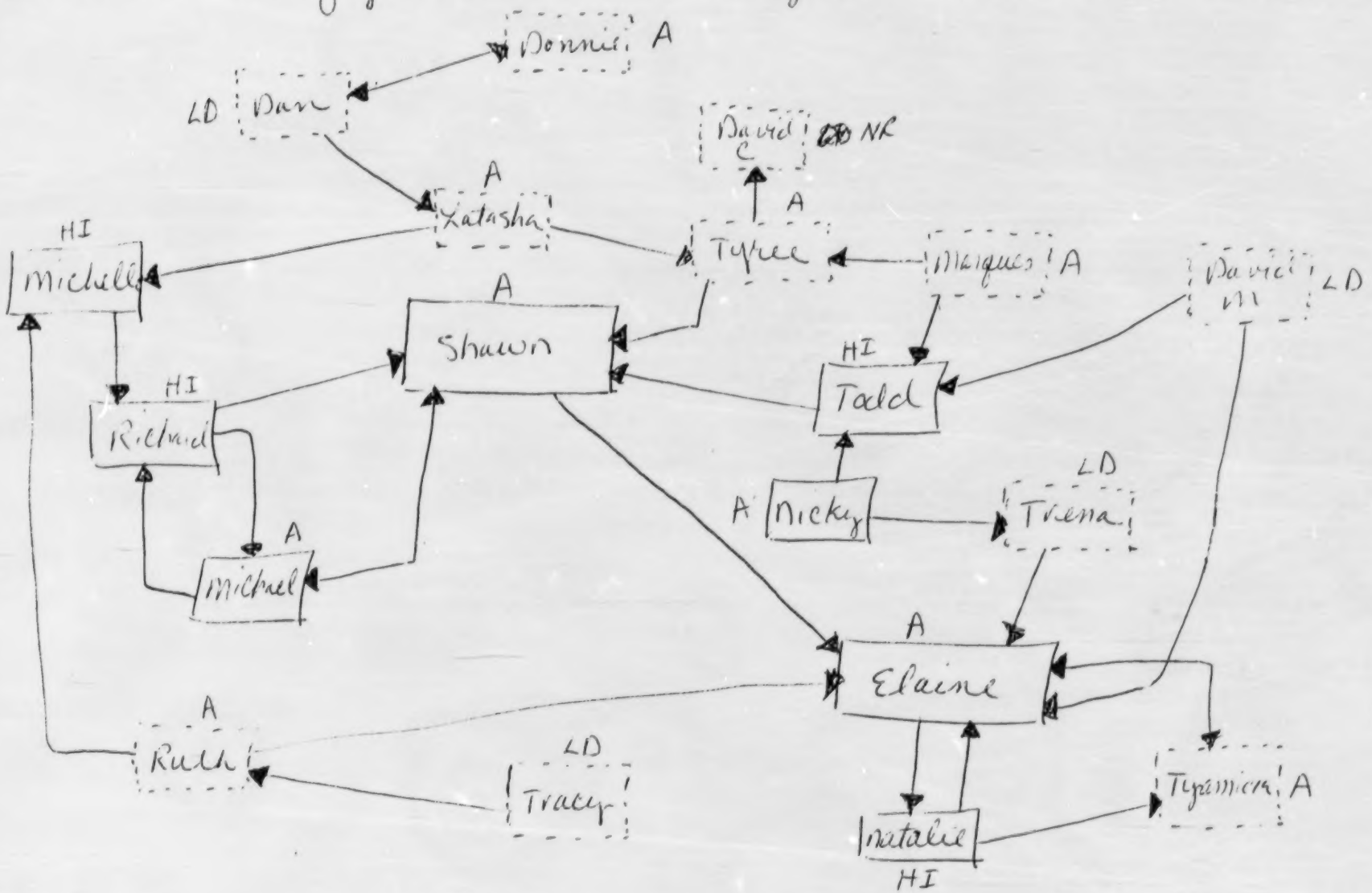
Social Organization - Changes Over Time

Context - Time Period 12 Noon - 1:15 p.m.

	Class A	Class B
	September - October	September - October
Teacher Directed Activity	Creation of "activity centers" - teacher moves from group to group emphazing class discussions	Substitute cannot control children's behavior - instruction constantly disrupted.
Children's Activity	children "free to play" upon completing assignments. Wide variation in play activities	children have extensive "free play" time - also socialize during lessons play marked by fighting and uproar
Teacher Categories Of Persons	Preliminary assessment of ability - focused attention on highly verbal children	Primarily concerned with deportment - "good" and "bad" children - little interest in academic ability
Children Categories Of Persons	Play mixed by race - segregated by sex no stable friendships yet	Play dominated by three boys (one white, two balck) dominance hierarchy emerges among boys - cross racial play extensive - sex segregated
	November - January	November - January
Teacher Directed Activity	Teacher selects one work group - assigns other children to projects or "free play"	Regular teacher returns - establishes control with system of rewards and punishment - sets up small group activities
Children's Activity	Play now concentrated in specific areas (block corner, day table)	Children still have frequent play periods - boys begin game of "spaceships"
Teacher Categories Of Persons	Work group selection appears random but based on ability "good talkers"	Teacher also concerned with deportment - focus on children's ability to be "independent" less concerned with academic ability

Children's Categories Of Persons	Class leaders now emerging cross color play decreasing	Boys have established dominance hierarchy - "toughness" prize class leaders emerging
	February - May	February - May
Teacher Directed Activity	Teacher has two work groups - teaches one while other children do project or play	Teacher has two work groups - while one works, other children do assignments or "free play". Teacher runs optional activity after "work" is finished
Children's Activity	Play centered primarily on cognitive activities puzzles, word games	Established play activities- puzzles and coloring for girls "spaceships" for boys
Teacher Categoris Of Persons	Work groups designated by name - "tens" (high ability children) - "diez" (low ability children)	Teacher sorts children by "high independents", "average" and "low dependents" - mixes math lesson by three categories
Children's Categories Of Persons	Children aware of group difference by ability - play groups based on work groups - racially segregated	Children sort by "toughness" and "niceness" - cross-racial play within the sexes, "boy/girl" distinctions

Figure 1 - Children's responses to question - who would you like to work with if you had to work really hard on numbers and letters

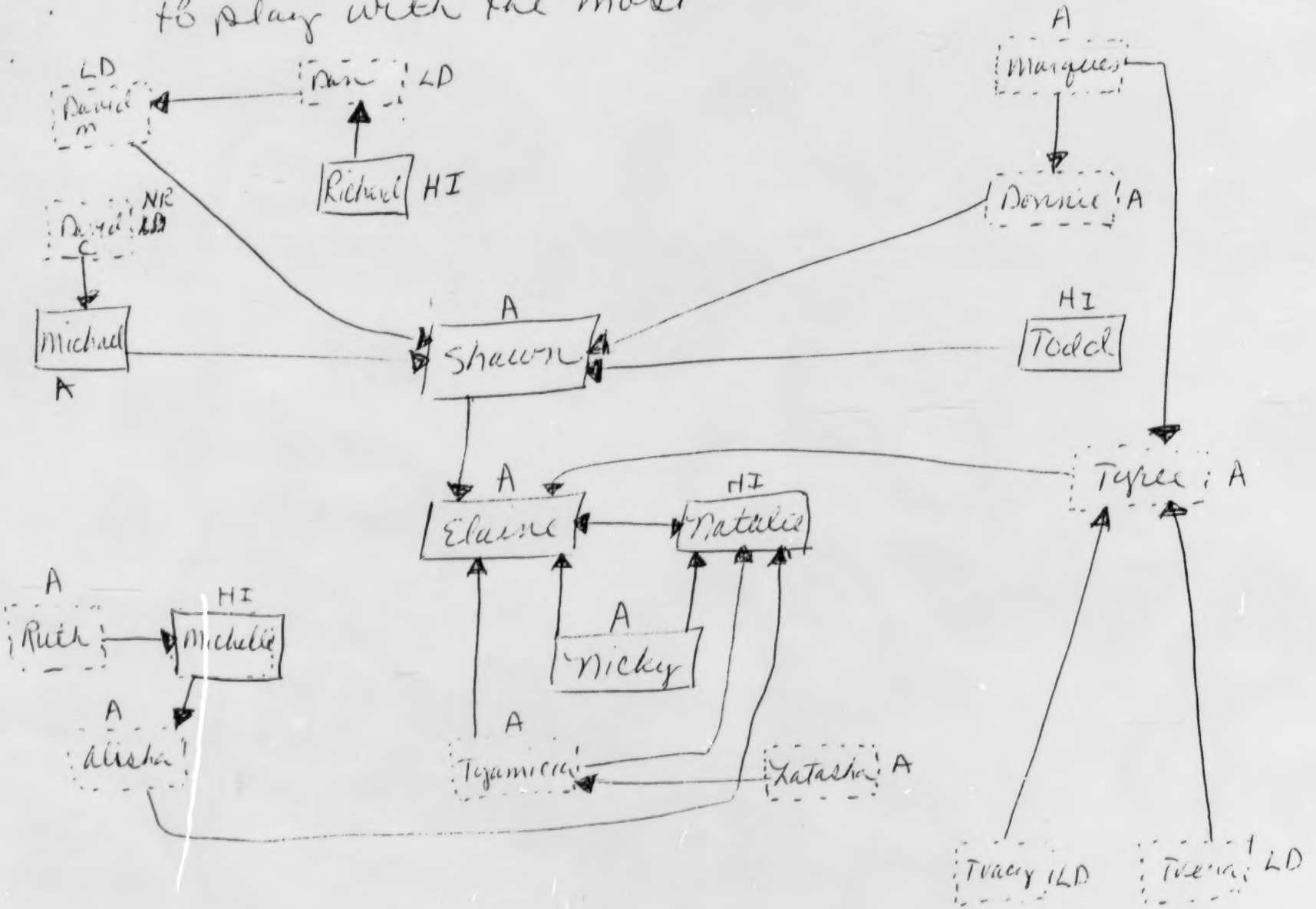


HI - high independent
A - average
LD - low dependents -
NR - not ready for Kindergarten

white
minority

Class B

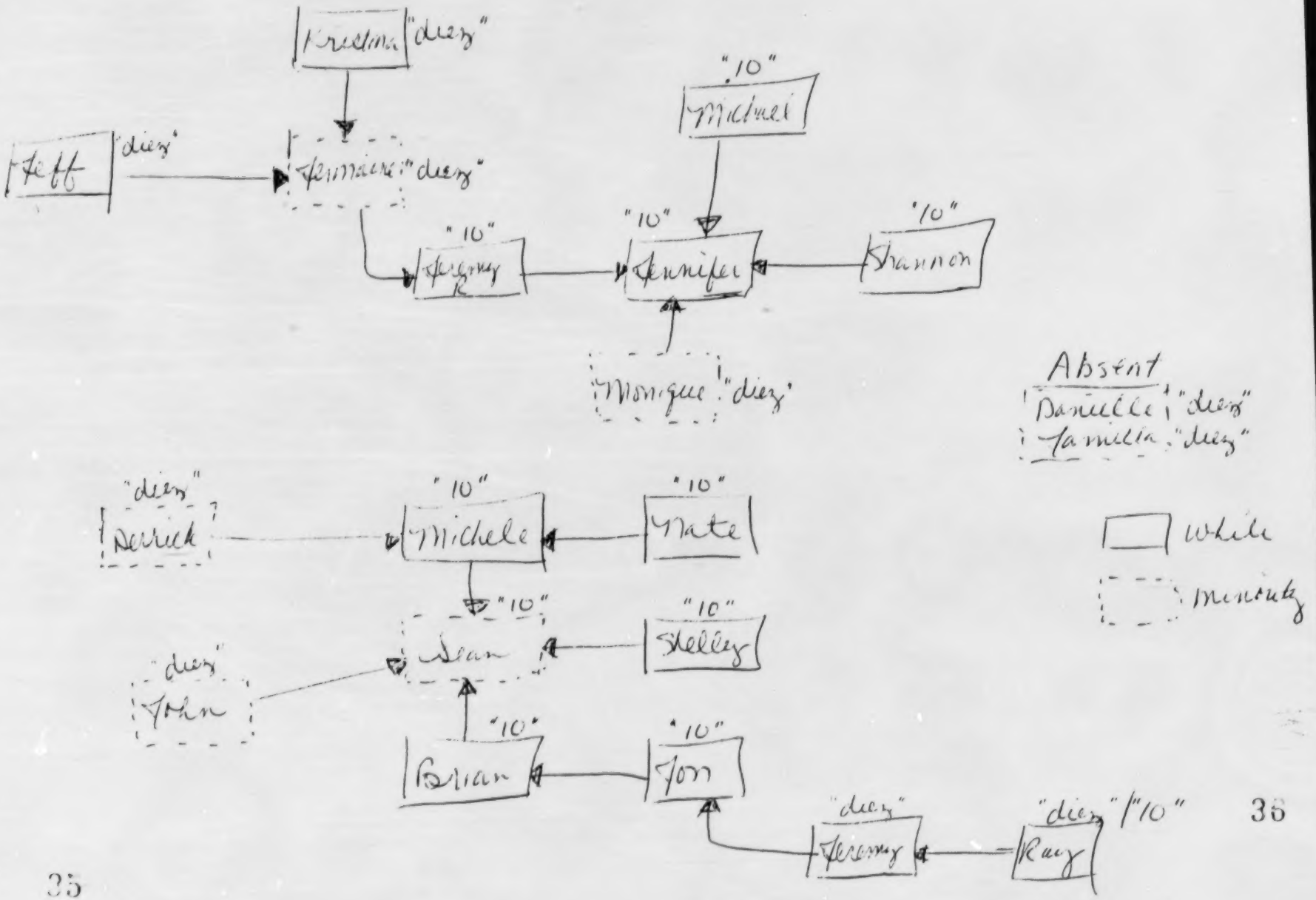
Figure 2 - Children's responses to question - who do you like to play with the most



HI - high independent
A - average
LD - low dependent
NP - not ready for K

white
minority

Figure 3- Childrens responses to question who would you want to be the teacher if Mrs A couldnt come to school

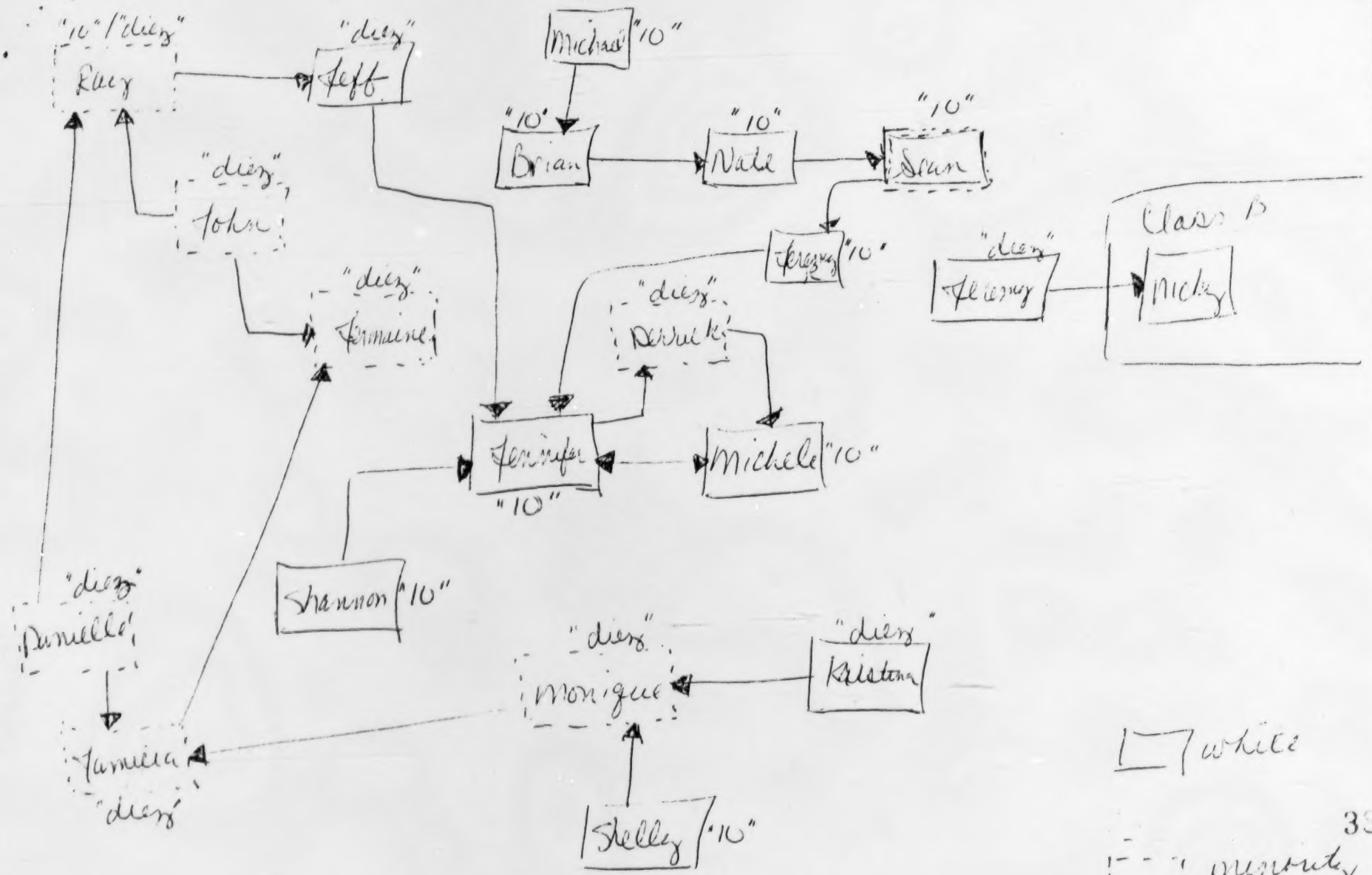


35

35

Class A

Figure 4- Childrens Responses to question Who do you like to play with the most



3

Class A